

Contending FOR THE Faith™

FOR THOSE WHO LOVE THE TRUTH AND HATE ERROR

REVIEW OF A SERMON CONCERNING DAVE MILLER AND ELDER RE-EVALUATION AND REAFFIRMATION

David B. Watson

The sermon under review was preached by Ed Rodgers at the Eastside church of Christ in Muskogee, Oklahoma on Sunday September 5, 2010 at the evening (6:00 PM) service. The sermon was tape recorded and later sent to me and several other brethren. I have had the tape-recorded sermon transcribed and I have been asked to review it.

One brother wrote: “Ed Rodgers shows his faulty reasoning through out his sermon. He seems to contradict himself more than once. He needs to be exposed for the ignorant false teacher he is.” With this statement I agree. I also believe that this sermon represents a general brotherhood wide problem (concerning fellowship of a false teacher) that needs to be exposed and refuted (Eph. 5:11).

“I DO NOT TEACH NOR BELIEVE THIS DOCTRINE”

At the very beginning of the sermon the speaker admitted: “there was a teaching there (at the Brown Trail Church in Bedford, Texas - DBW) that Dave Miller and several others who were on a committee taught, and they taught actually the idea of reaffirming elders.” He went on to admit that “they set an arbitrary number, that is if an elder got twenty five percent of the congregation or more that did not feel that they should continue serving as an elder, then that man would step down” (even though he might meet and continue to meet all Biblical qualifications). He then correctly con-

cluded: “You could conceivably lose the entire eldership. You might not lose any. You might lose one or two or whatever.” Such is what happened at Brown Trail. He then stated: (concerning the Dave Miller doctrine of elder re-evaluation and reaffirmation) “I do not teach nor believe this doctrine.” He further stated: “I do not believe it, however.”

Let me here state that I do not teach nor believe this doctrine either! The reason I do not believe nor teach the Dave Miller doctrine of elder re-evaluation and reaffirmation is because it is a false doctrine. The Apostle Paul commanded: “**And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him**” (Col. 3:17). Dave Miller, and his cohorts in crime, made a feeble attempt to find authority in the Bible for this false doctrine, but failed. To my knowledge, no one else has attempted to find authority in the Bible for this doctrine in all the years since. The Dave Miller doctrine of elder reevaluation and reaffirmation is not authorized in the Bible by direct statement, by example, or by implication. The Dave Miller doctrine of elder re-evaluation and reaffirmation is not any part of the doctrine of Christ. The Apostle John wrote:

Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not

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Contending FOR THE Faith™

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Ira Y. Rice, Jr., Founder
August 3, 1917-October 10, 2001

Editorial...

FROM NOT SO POLISHED PULPITS

Unlike the insipid, soft, and weak-kneed age in which we live, there was a time when, for the most part, religious people not only strongly held that their religious convictions must be taught by the Bible, but that they were worth publicly defending for the same reason. Moreover, they not only were willing to defend their religious convictions, but they readily attacked what they understood to be error, publicly debating the men that taught it. This militant attitude was characteristic of Baptists, Methodists, Presbyterians, Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses (as we know them today), Seventh Day Adventists, etc., and certainly the Lord's church.

In the biography of the late gospel preacher, debater, author, and teacher, **C. R. Nichol, a Preacher of Righteousness** (1952), the author and compiler Maude Jones Underwood included several vignettes written about him by brethren who knew him well.

One who wrote was the late Cled Wallace, the elder brother of the late Foy E. Wallace, Jr., whose father, the late Foy Wallace, was a close friend of and a fellow gospel preacher and debater with brother Nichol from the time they were young men. In writing about his father and brother Nichol, brother Cled related several debates in which both were involved—one debating while the other assisted and vice versa. One of those debates, when his father was the debater, is found on page 203.

...The first time Brother Nichol met my father was on the eve of a debate between father and a Methodist preacher by the name of Pledger. ... Pledger affirmed the first proposition of the debate which was on infant baptism, father denied and Nichol was his moderator. Brother Nichol said: "Foy, the logical consequence of Methodist doctrine is damnation to all unbaptized infants. Charge him with the consequences." Father replied: "Charlie, we are debating under Hedge's Rules of Logic which forbid a charging of consequences." Brother Nichol replied, "You charge consequences and **mash down on it.**" Nobody could beat father at mashing down when he got his masher to working. Pledger twisted and squirmed and finally arose and read the rule about consequences. While he was talking Brother Nichol was writing. Pledger insisted that father withdraw the statement and offer an apology for violating the rule. Father said quietly, "My moderator will take care of my part of this." Brother Nichol arose and read what he had written: "Unbaptized infants will be damned, is the consequence of Methodist doctrine." He demanded that Pledger sign the statement. He took the piece of paper, read it and said heatedly, "That is not the consequence of our doctrine." "Is that not what Brother Wallace charged?" demanded Nichol. "Yes," said Pledger. "If that is not the consequence of your doctrine, then you were out of order in disturbing his speech and we demand an apology from you." Nichol pressed him as Nichol could. Pledger apologized publicly and said he was

out of order. Brother Nichol said abruptly, "Go ahead, Foy," sat down and the mashing continued. Methodism suffered in that debate.

On page 210 Bro. Cled wrote of another debate:

Along about 1908 or 1909, my father moved to Sherman, TX, from Paris, TX, to preach for the Walnut Street church. H. M. Cagle was a promising debater among the Baptist and was fast becoming prominent. ... He was young bold and fearless, an effective speaker and popular among the Baptists. At the close of one of his debates, he predicted that "the Campbellites" would never meet him again. Father was in the audience. He arose and challenged Mr. Cagle for six debates in Grayson County, offered to hold all the debates himself, or furnish Mr. Cagle a different man for each debate, as he desired it. Mr. Cagle accepted the challenge. They met several times and it was always a battle royal for both were strong men and attendance was large. In one of them Mr. Cagle referred several times to "this young church started by Alexander Campbell less than one hundred years ago." Father suggested to him, that if he would drop such remarks and stick to the proposition, he would hold another debate with him and affirm that "the movement started by Alexander Campbell and his co-workers antedated the birth of the Missionary Baptist church." Mr. Cagle agreed and the future date was set.

It was nothing new by this time for father and brother Nichol to go into a huddle to mix up "poison." This debate was to be purely historical and history was not Mr. Cagle's strong point. He had been rather reckless in accepting such a proposition obviously thinking the debate would never materialize. However, he was not the backing down type. He thought he could at the last moment change it to the general church proposition or something of the kind. He had made very little historical preparation when time came for debate. "David" and "Jonathan" (this is how Wallace and Nichol signed letters they wrote to one another—DPB) were prepared, ready for a killing, and insisted on the proposition as scheduled. The debate lasted one day, two sessions. Brother Nichol sat at a table on the platform. The table was covered with books, properly paged and marked. When father needed one, it was handed to him, opened at the right place. It was a sort of a "gang-up" that under the circumstances Mr. Cagle did not relish. He cut the debate off short with excuses which were not one hundred per cent face-saving. Brother Nichol is under the impression, as I am, that this was his last debate. Not long after he came to an untimely death. He was strong and likable, was fortified with Polk Williams' scrap books, a Baptist veteran of a generation before who had met about all the pioneer debaters, including Joe S. Warlick. Had he lived, he would doubtless have been heard from as a top-notch Baptist debater for many years.

Regarding Nichol's debates bro. C. E. Wooldrige wrote:

In his early twenties he debated with J. N. Hall, then recognized as the strongest debater in the Missionary Baptist church. Three months following the debate he baptized 68 people, many of them from the Baptist church. This was in Jonah, Texas.

In 1901, November, at Bardwell, Texas, he debated with F L. Dupont at that time the leading Baptist debater in Texas. With-

in 18 months more than 75 people were baptized at Bardwell and the church has since that date been one of the strongest country churches in Central Texas.

Many years ago he was called to debate with an Adventist in Mississippi. There was no church and but few scattered brethren in that section. The gospel had never been preached there. The man who wrote him to make the trip from Texas for the debate gave him five dollars. Charlie went, as he has often gone under similar circumstances. At the close of that debate he baptized 53 people and established a congregation. Immediately they built a house for worship. More than 1000 persons have been baptized there since that debate. The congregation continues to prosper. This debate opened a virgin field for the gospel of Christ.

A debate with a representative of The Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, by many known as Mormons, was followed with four sermons and 40 persons were baptized by brother Nichol. These reports are given as an indication of the results that have followed his work as a debater and the results that can be expected when debates are properly conducted by competent men.

His debate with Bradley, Materialist, of Texas, is by many considered to be his strongest work in that line. This estimate probably due to the fact that the debate was published in book form, its value can be better appreciated. His speeches in this debate are the strongest refutation of the position of Materialists on the non-existence of the kingdom, and the total mortality of man, that have been published.

In two written discussions, one with Mr. Hensler, Baptist; and one with Mr. Ballard, Methodist, Brother Nichol showed himself master of the subjects discussed, and proficient with the pen, in debate. In debate he is brave, fearless and direct. He throws before his opponent the gospel which he preaches in sermons. Any argument he makes in preaching he is unafraid to have tested in debate, never fearing his ability to make it stand up under opposing fire. He is quick and accurate in thought and word, speaking rapidly, especially in debate and is merciless in the prosecution of a false position. Seldom does he resort to ridicule and never until he has shown by both logic and Scripture that the object of ridicule is untrue. However, when he does turn to ridicule he shows himself a master with the weapon. He is above all conscientious in his work regardless of what it be, He regards Mr. Berry, Presbyterian, as the most scholarly man; and J. N. Hall the most artful debater (p. 225).

Today most members of the church of Christ would denounce and oppose Nichol and his like, charging them with being judgmental, unloving, hateful, harsh, and hurtful. But, it is the church that has lost its respect for Bible authority, its love of and faith in God, her conviction, and her courage. Many brethren have not even the conviction of Nichol's denominational opponents. It is the church, with ever increasing speed, that is rapidly moving away from her New Testament moorings. She is adrift, caught up in the currents of a sectarian sea, tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine, and many brethren love to have it so.

—David P. Brown, Editor

INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY OF SECOND JOHN

Jack Stephens

INTRODUCTION

The Bible tells us that during the First Century, the early church enjoyed remarkable growth and spread throughout the world. The spread of the gospel was such that Paul declared in Col. 1:23 that it had been “**preached to every creature which is under heaven.**”¹

What accounted for this rapid spread of the gospel? We know of course that God chose the most appropriate time according to His will to bring His Son into the world because we read in Gal. 4:4 that “**when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law.**” God decided the proper time in which the world would best facilitate the building of the kingdom.

A time that was right politically, morally, economically, socially and every other way that God deemed the world to be ready for the kingdom as prophesied by Daniel and planned from before the foundation of the world (Dan. 2:44; Eph. 1:4-6; 3:10,11).

One such factor that helped account for the spread of the gospel was certainly the “hospitality” of the early Christians. Phi. 1:22 is an example showing that Paul was able to travel and depend upon Christians opening their homes to him.

In Third John 5-8, John also commended and encouraged those who provided lodging and support for teachers who traveled to spread the truth saying: “**We therefore ought to receive such, that we might be fellowhelpers to the truth.**”

There also existed then, as today, the natural desire to share fellowship with those of like precious faith. But showing such hospitality was not without its potential for supporting false teachers and the spread of false doctrines.

It would be easy for teachers of error to take advantage of the Christians' natural tendency to be hospitable to strangers. Thus it was necessary to counsel Christians to use proper discernment in sending traveling teachers on their way.

The second epistle of John addresses this very problem, warning against receiving certain teachers. A study of this text is recommended for all Christians, especially those who seek to help spread the truth through support of preachers, teachers and schools. Our prayer and hope is that we always seek to walk in the truth and support those who do the same.

INTRODUCTION TO THE SECOND EPISTLE OF JOHN

John's epistles served to help the early church in the battle against false teachers and their doctrine. Today as we observe those among us who are teaching by their actions, if

not by their words, doctrines concerning fellowship contrary to John's simple and plain teaching, these books continue to serve the Lord's church in that ongoing battle. In this introductory study of Second John, we will begin by answering certain fundamental questions.

THE AUTHORSHIP OF SECOND JOHN

The letter does not bear any name, nor does it contain any indication of the author that can be considered conclusive. The fact that the three epistles attributed to the apostle John make no specific identification of the author indicates that he apparently did not need to identify himself for his message to be accepted by those receiving the epistle. The recipients evidently knew who wrote the letter. And it is most likely that a person who had authority and recognition, such as John would write such a letter. A clear identification and statement of authority would have been needed if the person were not well known, especially if the recipients were to heed the message. However, Bible scholars appear to be in agreement and the authorship is not really doubted in any meaningful way. The Gospel according to John and the three epistles, are too closely linked together to be separated, and assigned, some to one author and some to another. And if they are all by one writer, that writer, beyond all reasonable doubt, is John the apostle.²

The author of both Second and Third John is identified simply as “**The elder**” (literally, the presbyter, *ho presbuteros* in the Greek text). Since the article “**the**” appears before “**elder,**” emphasis is given to the writer as a person rather than to an official position. Additionally, the term “**the elder**” would be a fitting description of the apostle John as the author writing in his old age if, as some estimate, the epistle was written as late as A.D. 90. John's use of “**the elder**” could indicate that he alone of the apostles still remained alive.

The basis of the agreement among conservative scholars that the author is John is the abundant internal and external evidence. External evidence includes the fact that numerous writers of the early centuries assign them to the apostle John.

Clement of Alexandria cited them; Dī-ō-ny-sē-us noted that John did not name himself in his Epistles, “not even in the Second and Third Epistles, although they are short Epistles, but simply calls himself the presbyter.” Cyprian introduced a quotation from 2 John 10, as written by “**John the Apostle.**”³

We learn elsewhere that Irenaeus of Lyons, a pupil of Polycarp (who in turn was a pupil of the apostle John), twice quotes Second John as belonging to the apostle John.

The internal evidence is even more convincing. The three epistles of John embody the same language and the same ideas. There is little that is peculiar to them, as distinct from the First Epistle, or the Gospel according to John; and of the Second Epistle, seven or eight of the thirteen verses are found in the First Epistle.⁴

Some have proposed other authors, but they are all very obscure men of whom we have no clear identification. There is no clear evidence of any other “John” who Christians of the early church and recipients of the letter would consider to be a man of authority. And there does not appear to be any motivation for someone to foist a fraud upon the recipient through forgery. It would seem almost certain that a forger would have used, or even flaunted, the title of “Apostle” or the “Apostle John” in preference to the more humble designation of “elder.” Apparently the author of these epistles was so universally known, and his authority recognized, that he needed no other title.

The early reluctance to accept both Second and Third John as authentic was “because of their private nature and limited circulation, so they did not enjoy a widespread acceptance.”⁵ However, it seems that from the time that the language, sentiments, ideas, and doctrines of the epistles were critically examined, “no doubts are entertained about their authorship.”⁶ For example, Second and Third John are short letters, hence, the number of doctrinal subjects mentioned are small. Yet the subject of “Truth” is one that weaves its way from the beginning of First John 1:6, through Second John versus 4, to near the end of Third John versus 12, tying them all together, indicating common authorship. “Truth” also weaves its way through the gospel of John further indicating common authorship with the epistles.

Lastly, the tone of authority permeates all of the Johanne epistles. It is an authority that is seldom put forward in a prominent way, but is present in such a way that would be difficult to assume if not actually possessed. The author of Second John had either done much to uphold his claim to be heard and obeyed such as would suit an apostle, or his authorship was common knowledge.

If the criteria of reference by writers of the early centuries, vocabulary, style, ideas and language are ever adequate for determining authorship, then the epistle of Second John must be attributed to the apostle John.

THE RECIPIENTS AND OCCASION OF SECOND JOHN

The letter is addressed to “**the elect lady and her children.**” The question that begs to be answered is one that divides many scholars: Is this an actual person or, a figure of speech representing the church?

The Greek phrase, *e-klek-te ku-ria*, translated elect lady, has several possible meanings. If the designation is personal, there may be three possible meanings. First, *kuria* could be

a personal name with “elect” as a descriptive modifier: “to the elect Cyria.” Second, *eklekte* could be a proper name as Clement of Alexandria regarded it⁷ with *kuria*, “lady,” a modification: “to the lady Eclecte.” Or third, it could be that neither *eklekte* or *kuria* is meant as a personal name and that both were meant to be descriptive: “to the elect lady,” with the person not being identified any further.

Against the idea that *eklekte* is a proper name is John's use of the same word in verse 13 as an adjective, “**The children of thy elect (eklekte) sister greet thee.**” It does not seem likely that two sisters would have the same name.

Another possibility is that “elect lady” is not a person but rather a personification for the church. If it is to have this meaning, it would have to represent a local church and not the church universal.

Trying to fit the meaning to the church universal presents difficulties with verse 13; What would represent the sister of the church universal? Our Lord has only one church (Eph. 4:4). Additionally, the church universal includes all the elect, all the children. Who would represent the children of the elect sister?

If the “elect lady” is to represent the church using the allegory of a woman, “**The children of thy elect sister**” may possibly mean that the members of one local church are greeting another local church. However, it seems unlikely that in so short a letter that John would use allegorical language.

Brother Guy N. Woods, writing in regard to the “**elect lady**” being figuratively designated using the allegory of a woman, stated:

To reach this conclusion, one must translate the Greek word *kuria* as “lady,” interpret the word “lady” as a church, and then construe the Greek word *tekna*, children, as members of the church! Only in highly figurative portions of the scriptures is the church ever referred to as a woman; and it seems very unlikely that the apostle, in this brief treatise, should have used the word thus figuratively.⁸

This appears to be a case where the literal meaning is the best one because the literal one makes sense and no difficulties confront the Bible student if we assume the elect lady to be an individual.

However, it is important to remember that no matter which opinion one may hold on the recipients of Second John, whether written to an individual and her children or to a local congregation of the Lord's church, it makes no difference—it is addressed to New Testament Christians. Holding to either opinion does not affect the meaning, the force, nor the application of the epistle's message.

As we now consider the occasion for this letter, like most of the epistles in our New Testament, the three epistles of John are special, or specific, and occasional.

The first epistle lays a foundation of Christian conduct

and how to cope with false teachers and the dangerous seductions of Gnosticism that threatened the church at large. Second John deals with the same danger as it affected the elect lady and her children. The subject of what to do with false teachers who **“abideth not in the doctrine of Christ”** is at the heart of the epistle.

John expresses his appreciation for the elect lady's loyalty to the truth as it manifested itself in the faithfulness of certain of her children. He also took this occasion to warn her of deceivers and false teachers, admonishing her to abide in the doctrine of Christ while refusing to aid and comfort those who had gone beyond the teaching of Christ. John is concerned with the hospitality, and consequently the fellowship, toward false teachers, that perhaps the lady with mistaken generosity had given a welcome. He urges them to cultivate a vigilance against false teachers and not to have anything to do with such a one who **“abideth not in the doctrine of Christ”** to avoid losing their reward.

THE DATING OF SECOND JOHN

Without any reference in the letters to use, it is not possible to speak with any certainty of the time or place the epistles were written. However, the most accepted view is that these documents were written by John for the Asian churches in the middle of the last third of the first century.⁹

From the many similarities of both Second and Third John, most scholars infer that they were written about the same time and possibly from the same place. John died near the end of the first century and appears to have been a rather aged man when the letter was written as indicated by using the term “the elder” in verse 1 and often referring to his readers in his epistles as his “little children.”

Most scholars believe that Second and Third John were written between about the years A.D. 80 and 90. Brother Woods wrote that, “in view of the known facts, that the date would be nearer A.D. 90 than A.D. 80, or earlier.”¹⁰

THE BACKGROUND OF SECOND JOHN

To understand the background of any Bible book is desirable and of immense value and to understand the erroneous beliefs and errors that John dealt with is helpful in our study. John wrote in 1 John 4:1, **“Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world.”** It did not matter how educated or clever they were. It did not matter how popular they may have been or where they thought they may have stood in the brotherhood. It did not matter what they may have been or professed in the past. John even warned in 1 John 2:19, **“They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us.”** John said “try,” or prove, the spirits. Put them to the acid test of truth. If it stands the test, it is acceptable;

otherwise, it is to be rejected. He said in 2 John 7 that **“many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh.”** Such a claim stands in opposition to the eternal purpose of the Creator.

Who were these deceivers who denied that Jesus came in the flesh? Those that taught such were known as Gnostics and their false teaching opposed the human and deity nature of Jesus the Christ. The Gnostics were not open enemies and persecutors of the church and Christianity. Yet their false teaching was deadly, not necessarily from a physical point of view, it was fatal in that it was not the teaching of Christ. This false doctrine, therefore, placed man out of fellowship with God, 2 John 9.

The term Gnostic comes from the Greek word *gnosis* meaning knowledge. Gnosticism professed to give its approval and blessing to the gospel. The gospel was good as far as it went, but Gnostics professed to have a deeper and more genuine knowledge than that held by the ordinary (as they saw it) Christian. Merrill C. Tenney, in his *New Testament Survey*, described Gnosticism as “a system which promised salvation by knowledge.”¹¹ The teaching of the Gnostic philosophy is in conflict with the apostles' doctrine and is most acute at the point of the person of Christ.

As with any false doctrine or system of religion, once it departs from the truth of God, there is no way of telling where it may end up except that it will be far and away from the truth. As Tenney explained the teachings of Gnosticism as it progressed over time, he wrote:

How, asked the Gnostics, could the infinite, pure spirit of God have anything to do with a material body? A complete union would, on their premises, be unthinkable. They proposed two solutions: either Christ was not really human, but only apparently so, or else the Christ-spirit did not actually inhabit the human Jesus until the baptism, and left Him before His death on the cross. The former theory was called Docetism, from the verb *dokeo*, meaning “to seem”; the latter was called Cerinthianism, from Cerinthus, its chief advocate in the first century...¹²

The apostle John clearly takes exception to such Gnostic teachings as he insists that the Jesus that he preached was audible, he was visible, and he was tangible and real as to be touchable. He wrote in 1 John 1:1, **“That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled...”**

John went on to declare that those that did not confess that Jesus came in the flesh were not of God, 1 John 4:2, 3. Evidently John is exposing those who took a position that closely resembled that of Docetic Gnosticism. John warns the readers of his first epistle about such teachers in 1 John 2:18, 19.

Judaism denied that Jesus (the Messiah) had come in the flesh; Gnosticism, the current heresy at the time when

John wrote his epistles, denied that he could come in the flesh. Either doctrine was heretical and a departure from the truth, and those that spread any such teaching were deceivers. Second John deals with this problem from the standpoint of church discipline.

SUMMARY OF THE SECOND EPISTLE OF JOHN

As we approach the study of Second John, we want to notice how John encourages a steadfast and unswerving adherence to the teaching of Christ leaving no doubt about the seriousness of going beyond the truth. This serious problem is not a problem relegated to John's day only, it is a dangerous and grievous problem that has plagued the church of our Lord from the beginning.

A. T. Robertson wrote the following about those who desire to go beyond the teachings of Christ and the Gnostic teachers of John's day:

These Gnostics claimed to be the progressives, the advanced thinkers, and were anxious to relegate Christ to the past in their onward march. This struggle goes on always among those who approach the study of Christ. Is he a "landmark" merely or is he our goal and pattern? Progress we all desire, but progress toward Christ, not away from him.¹³

MAJOR THOUGHTS OF SECOND JOHN

The emphasis of this short book is love for the truth and opposition to error by forbidding fellowship with false teachers. One cannot fail to notice that the key word in this brief letter is truth. In fact, verse 2 seems to sum up the theme of the letter very well: **"For the truth's sake, which dwelleth in us, and shall be with us for ever."** In this verse John gives us the reason why all who know the truth, love those in truth: it is for the sake of the truth that abides in us.

John loved the elect lady and her children because of the truth that dwelt both in him and in them. As expressed by others, only those who have love for the truth love in truth. With joy in his heart, John commends, and with a pleading voice, he exhorts. He commends them for walking in truth and he exhorts them to walk in love. John informs his readers that to walk in truth is to **"love one another"** (v. 5) and to **"walk after his commandments"** (v. 6) which involves strict adherence to the teaching of Christ (v. 9).

Though the key word in this epistle may be truth, John also stresses the importance of love. Upon closer examination, we have a commendation for walking in truth (v. 4) and an exhortation to walk in love (vs. 5, 6).

Love and duty to abide in the truth are two of the key themes of John's writings. The one is an offspring of the other; love prompts one to the keeping of the commandments. **"For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments,"** 1 John 5:3. This same thought is expressed in 2 John 6, **"And this is love, that we walk after his commandments."** But what if someone comes your way, teaching doctrine contrary to what you have learned from Jesus

and His apostles? Should your desire to **"love one another"** (v. 5) permit you to receive and support those teaching error? Can we do so, and still be **"walking in truth"** (v. 4)?

In the remaining portion of his short letter, John (the "apostle of love") is very explicit about such things. He warns the elect lady, and all New Testament Christians, in verse 7 to beware of deceivers and antichrists. He instructs her and her children in verse 8 to **"look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought."**

In 2 John 9, he continues by warning his readers of the danger of not abiding in the doctrine of Christ and the loss that could result in listening to the false teachers, the **"deceivers"** that he mentioned in verse 7. Any movement that results in moving away from the doctrine of Christ is a move in the wrong direction. It is movement away from Christ which results in the loss of God himself.

John then tells his audience in 2 John 10 and 11 that they cannot support teachers who fail to teach the doctrine of Christ without sharing in their evil deeds. The principle that John teaches here and elsewhere is simple. Supporting a teacher made one a fellow worker with him who taught. If the teacher is a faithful purveyor of the truth of God, that would make one a fellow worker for the truth. John says as much in his Third epistle. **"We therefore ought to receive such, that we might be fellowhelpers to the truth,"** 3 John 8. But if his teaching is false, contrary to the doctrine of Christ, supporting him is to share in his evil deeds and makes us a fellow worker in his sin, 2 John 11.

With this warning against receiving false teachers, John's purpose in writing is fulfilled. He then signs off with a brief farewell, having so much more to write, but desiring to speak in person **"...that our joy may be full"** (v.12). Even today, despite the convenience of remote communication, such as writing letters, talking on the phone, or sending email, nothing surpasses the joy of talking face-to-face. He then sends greetings from **"the children of thy elect sister"** (v. 13).

A PIVOTAL PASSAGE: 2 JOHN 8

Clearly there are two major sections to Second John. In the first section, John writes to the elect lady and her children, expressing an appreciation for their loyalty to the truth as it was manifested in the faithfulness of certain of her children. He admonishes her to continue in love and obedience to the commandments of the Father for many deceivers and false teachers are in the world.

In the second section, John admonishes her to abide in the doctrine of Christ while refusing to give aid and comfort to those who have moved beyond the teaching of Christ and have not God. He instructs her that the end result of aiding the false teachers and deceivers was to be a partaker in their evil, a partaker in their sin.

In between these two major sections is a pivotal passage,

2 John 8, that deserves our close attention. In verse 8 we see a summons to self-guardianship. John cautions his readers that they have a duty and responsibility to **“Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward.”** From this passage, it is clear that effort and participation is essential to man's salvation. We must be careful and deliberate in weighing all teaching that comes into our midst, taking care to compare it with what was delivered from the beginning, careful to **“try the spirits whether they are of God”** (1 John 4:1). He cautions us to take a soul-searching, introspective view of ourselves to see if we are strong enough to withstand the deceivers mentioned in verse 7 that we will encounter.

What means can we use to guard ourselves from false teachers and deceivers? First, we can guard against error in our faith and knowledge of God's word. **“Prove all things; hold fast that which is good”** (1 Thes. 5:21). Second, we can seek to know more about the truth of God. **“Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth”** (2 Tim. 2:15) Third, we need to observe, keep and maintain our spiritual vitality. During the cold season, people who have a low state of physical health are more likely to fall victims to the sickness. Likewise, when a person has a low state of spiritual health, they are easy prey to error. One of the most effective and efficient safeguards against the corruption of our faith is a healthy, vigorous spiritual life. Last of all, the most effective way of looking to ourselves is to look earnestly toward Christ. Doing so will secure our safety, our progress in maturing in the faith, and our full reward.

Many start out their Christian life and service with a fervent zeal, and work earnestly for a time, and then grow lukewarm and decline into useless servants in the kingdom. Great is the eternal loss of their reward, but let it not be so with us. We need to be covetous of our **“full reward”** that we lose it not. By looking inward to ourselves and examining our faith, we will be aware of, and concerned about, our own standing before God. This should cause us to quickly reject any and all threats to our spiritual well-being that any deceiver and false teacher poses.

There are several other points that 2 John 8 emphasizes. First, apostasy is possible. Why else would we need to look to ourselves? If apostasy is not possible, how could you lose your reward? In the elect lady and her children's case, if they were deceived by being misled into a false application of love by the deceivers and false teachers, they would bring to naught all that had previously been done. On the other hand, if they were watchful and faithful to the truth as they had received it, they would receive a full reward.

A second point is that constant self-examination is vital. Paul wrote in 2 Cor. 13:5, **“Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves.”** It is essential to our eternal welfare that a most demanding self-examination

should constantly be made of our standing before God; that the exact truth should be known. If we are deceived, it is best for ourselves that we should not be left under the delusion that we are secure in the Lord, but that, understanding our own case, we might be led to secure our salvation through obedience to the doctrine of Christ.

The third point is that vigilance is a condition of spiritual success. Paul wrote in 1 Cor. 16:13, **“Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong.”** We must be vigilant against the temptations of Satan if we want to be successful in obtaining our full reward.

Finally, there is a reward we can either gain or lose. It is a heavenly reward that will be realized in the day of judgment. The danger of losing this reward by the failure to abide in the doctrine of Christ, or by giving aid and comfort to those who endanger our fellowship with God, is enough to warrant John's warning: **“Look to yourselves.”** That which the elect lady and her children stood in danger of losing was the most priceless possession they had: the salvation of their souls. Likewise, we need to know that we too are in danger of losing our own salvation when we will not abide in the doctrine of Christ and seek to aid, comfort and fellowship deceivers and false teachers.

We need to understand that when one knowingly, willfully and adamantly fellowships a false teacher, he is a partaker of his evil deed, a partaker of his sin. When a person will not renounce his fellowship of known false teachers, he, by implication of his actions, teaches that one may fellowship false teachers; and that is contrary to the scriptures, and more specifically to the teachings of 2 John 9-11. He has then become a heretic and Paul, by inspiration of the Holy Spirit, wrote in Titus 3:10, **“A man that is an heretick after the first and second admonition reject.”** And if a man encourages others to continue in fellowship with a known false teacher, he has become a stumbling block and will answer for that sin. Of course, the people being influenced have free will and must answer for allowing themselves to be deceived. Yet some men, whether it is merited or not, have much influence within the church by their teaching or preaching position—and people look to them for advice, and listen to their teachings, and observe their actions—and people are deceived.

How does this happen? To quote one such man in his own words from the 1994 Denton Lectures book, page 494, and substituting only the word Millerism in place of Ketchersidism, he said:

However, some preachers who were very strong in the Truth and well respected have now gone over to Millerism, and some members of the church cannot bring themselves to see that such men change. Therefore, these men are being able to deceive the hearts of those weak in the faith and/or unlearned in the Scriptures.¹⁴

I could not have explained any better in my own words how this deception happens. The author of that quote is brother Curtis Cates. He understands exactly how the deceiving of the weak takes place—and yet he upholds Dave Miller, a known false teacher, in fellowship.

Brethren, in these troublesome times we need to examine closely whose hands we uphold in fellowship. We need to look to ourselves: in self-examination, at our standing with God, and with whom we are in fellowship; then, we need to correct any wrongs in our spiritual life and seek diligently to receive our eternal reward.

CONCLUSION

As we close our study of Second John, it is hoped that you are left with a strong sense of the need to walk in the truth in love and to be very careful about those teachers to whom we give our support. We need to heed the call of our Savior recorded by the apostle John wherein he said, **“Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you”** (John 15:14) rather than compromise with deceivers and false teachers.

It is important that we teach people to assemble for worship, to give of their means generously, and to live righteously; but we should not be content to stop there. It is vital for us to teach the word of God and instill its precepts into the hearts of men. We must uphold the truth against false doctrine and **“earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints”** (Jude 3). But it is essential that we create within people a respect and love for the teachings of the Bible in general, and the doctrine of Christ in particular, a respect and love that exceeds all other loyal-

ties they may hold—including loyalties to men, schools and other works of the church.

And everyday we need to look to ourselves and ask, “How is our walk today? Are we walking according to the doctrine of Christ concerning truth in love?”

END NOTES

- 1All quotations are from the *King James Version*
- 2*The Pulpit Commentary* (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1950), Volume 22, The Epistles Of John, p. i
- 3Guy N. Woods, *A Commentary on the New Testament Epistles of Peter, John and Jude* (Gospel Advocate Co., 1968), Volume VII, pp. 332-333
- 4Ibid, p. 333
- 5Norman L. Geisler and William E. Nix, *A General Introduction to the Bible, Revised and Expanded* (Moody Press, 1968, 1986), p. 300
- 6Adam Clarke, *Commentary on the Whole Bible* (Carlton and Porter, 1829), Volume VI, p. 934
- 7*Hypotyposes, The Ante-Nicene Fathers* (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1963), Volume II, p. 576
- 8 Woods, p. 338
- 9 Merrill C. Tenney, *New Testament Survey* (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1961), p. 376
- 10 Woods, p. 334
- 11 Tenney, p. 376
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- 13A.T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament* (Broadman, 1933), Volume VI, p. 254
- 14Cates, Curtis, *Studies in Joshua, Judges and Ruth*, (Valid Publications, Inc., 1994), p. 494

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THE OLD PATHS PULPIT

Sermon Outline

First Things First—Matthew 6:33

Danny Douglas

Introduction:

1. Where are our priorities?
2. We may be concerned about being moral and religious, and still have misplaced priorities. The rich young ruler is a good example of this (Mat. 19:16-22). Where is our emphasis? On what do we spend the most time? (Col. 3:1-4).
3. Love for God is to be first (Mark. 12:29-31), and our hearts and affections are to be set on things above, not on things of this earth (Col. 3:1-4). Let this be our aim!

I. Do We Place More Emphasis on the Material Rather than the Spiritual and Eternal?

- A. Jesus taught man to: “labour for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life” (cf. John. 6:26-7).
- B. Let us strive for: “a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens” (2 Cor. 5:1-4). On what do we spend more time? (Mat. 6:33).
- C. Are we more concerned with our physical property or the things of the kingdom?
 1. In Haggai’s day people had become negligent in the building of the Lord’s house, although their own houses were in good (Hag. 1:1-1-6).
 2. As a result of this, God had not prospered them (Hab. 1:7-11).
 - a. God stirred them up to do the work He intended for them to do (Hab. 1:12-15).
 - b. Those who spend their lives laboring for the Lord do not labor in vain (1 Cor. 15:58).
 - c. What did Jesus emphasize? (Mat. 8:20; John. 14:1-6).
- D. Are we more concerned with our physical account & assets than we are with our account with God and the treasure that we are laying up in heaven? (Mat. 6:19-21; Rom. 14:10-12).
- E. Love for God means that we will be obedient to His will (John. 14:15, 21-24; 1 John. 2:4-5).
- F. Some congregations are material minded rather than spiritually minded. For example:
 1. Place more emphasis on entertainment than sound doctrine (2 John. 9-11).
 2. The physical building is more important to them than the spiritual welfare and soundness of the congregation (Rev. 3:15-17).
- G. Is our concern more for things of Jesus Christ or own things? (Phil. 2:19-21; Mat. 6:33).

II. Our Physical Body or our Eternal Soul?

- A. While the physical body does not a certain amount of concern and attention, the main emphasis should be on spiritual growth and the building up of the spiritual man (1 Tim. 4:16; Mark. 8:36-37).
- B. The Scriptures place emphasis on godliness over bodily exercise (1 Tim. 4:7-9).
 1. Examples of much time and money on the physical body and the neglect of the soul.
 2. The Scriptures declare that women should give emphasis to “the hidden man of the heart...even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit,” rather than “outward adorning.”
 3. This kind of spirit is “in the sight of God of great price” (1 Peter. 3:3-4).
- C. Many strive to preserve that which ultimately must pass away, but neglect that which will go into eternity, namely, the soul or spirit (Mat. 10:28; 2 Cor. 4:16-18; 1 Peter 1:23-25).
- D. We must “give all diligence” to make our “calling and election sure” (2 Peter 1:10-11; vs. 5-7).
- E. Multitudes fear those who can kill the body, but they do not fear God, Who can: “destroy both soul and body in hell” (Mat. 10:28).
 1. The whole of man is to fear God and keep His commandments (Ecc. 12:13-14).
 2. In so doing, we will be ready to meet Him in the Judgment (2 Cor. 5:10).

III. Earthly Knowledge or the Knowledge of God?

- A. Earthly knowledge may serve to help us get through this life and to be used by God. For example, Moses learning

- in Egypt (Acts 7:22).
- B. God emphasizes our knowledge of Him and His word as being the most important (Pro. 1:7; 8:13; 9:10; 2 Peter 3:18; 2 Tim. 2:15).
 - C. God's word provides many blessings. For example:
 - 1. Strength, life and the power to overcome (John 6:63; Mat. 4:4; Acts 20:32; Heb. 4:12).
 - 2. Salvation (Jas. 1:21; Rom. 1:16; John 6:66-69; 2 Tim. 3:15).
 - 3. Guidance and instruction (Psa. 119:105; 2 Tim. 3:16-17).
 - 4. Comfort (Rom. 15:4; 1 Thes. 5:18).
 - 5. It has the power to tear down the bastions of Satan (2 Cor. 10:3-5; Eph. 6:17).
 - D. This requires labor and work (1 Tim. 5:17; 2 Tim. 2:15).
 - 1. The story was told of a lady who said to a preacher after hearing him speak: "I would give the world if I knew the Bible like you." He replied, "That's exactly what I have had to give." (1 John 2:15-17).
 - 2. We have to sacrifice a certain amount of recreation and secular pursuits in order to be a knowledgeable and fruitful laborer in the kingdom (John 15:1-5).
 - 3. Some will not even give up some TV or other things to go and study God's word. Many church members are: "choked with cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection" (Luke 8:14).
 - 4. They are "choking to death" (spiritually) because they are entangled in the affairs of this life (2 Tim. 2:4).
 - E. We must apply and obey what we learn from the word of God (Jas. 1:22; Mat. 7:21).
 - 1. We cannot know God unless we apply His teaching and obey it! (1 John 2:3).
 - 2. Wisdom of this world is foolish in God's eyes (1 Cor. 3:19), and the Lord's wisdom seems foolish to the world (1 Cor. 1:18-25).

IV. Pleasing man or Pleasing God?

- A. Men are pleased with the physical, with the outward, with that which gives temporary satisfaction (1 Sam. 16:7; Luke 16:15; Pro. 31:30; Psa. 147:10).
- B. God is pleased with a good heart & the obedience with comes from it (1 Sam. 15:22-23; 16:7; John 8:29; Mat. 5:8; 7:21; Luke 8:15). We please God by keeping His commandments (1 John 3:22).
- C. The meat of Jesus was to do the Father's will (John 4:34; Mat 6:39).
- D. If we seek to please men, we cannot please God (Gal. 1:10).
- E. If we continue in the word of Christ, we will have the Father and the Son, and will be continually cleansed by the blood of Christ, as those who are in the light (1 John 1:5-7).

In Summary:

- 1. In order to put first things first, we must labor for the spiritual above the material (John. 6:26-27).
- 2. It is foolish to live for that which one day will pass away, namely, this temporal world (1 John 2:15-17).
- 3. Do we trust in "uncertain riches" or the living God (1 Tim. 6:17-19; Luke 12:15-21).
- 4. To sum up all of these thoughts, do we love God first? Do we love Him supremely? (Mark 12:29-30; John 14:15).
- 5. Do we love our neighbor and our soul, more than we love earthly things? (Mark 12:31).
- 6. Do we emphasize obedience to God, prayer, serving and working for the Lord, devotion to Christ—His church & His Lord, over this world & the pleasures thereof? (Heb. 5:8-9; 11:24-27; Mat. 6:33; Phi. 2:5; 1 Cor. 15:58; Acts 2:42).
- 7. Have you obeyed the gospel of Christ? To obey it you must:
 - a. Hear the Word of God—Luke 8:11; Rom. 10:17; 1:16; 10:8; Jam. 1:18; 2:20;
 - b. Believe that Jesus Christ of Nazareth is the Son of God (Heb. 11:1, 6; John 8:24; Mark 16:16;
 - c. Repent & turn to God—Acts 2:38; 3:19; 17:30; 26:20;
 - d. Confess Jesus Christ as the Son of God—Acts 8:35-39; Rom. 10:9-10;
 - e. Be Baptized in His name for the remission of sins—Acts 2:38; :19; 8:32-39; Gal. 3:27; Rom. 6:3-4; Mat. 28:18-20; Heb. 5:9.
- 8. Then be faithful to the Lord—Rev. 2:10; 1 Cor. 15:58; 1 John. 1:5-2:6; 3:22.

DON'T SWEAT THE SMALL OR UNIMPORTANT STUFF

Gene Litke

A LESSON LEARNED FROM A "DEPTH FINDER"

Several years ago I was in the market for a used car and a friend put me in contact with a gentleman who ran a business buying and selling boats and cars out of his home. He was a severe diabetic and disabled and he helped support his family working out of his home. He had a car I was interested in buying and I had a boat I was selling so we reached a deal where I could trade him the boat as part of the deal. I agreed to bring the boat to his house on a certain day and exchange it for the car. I cleaned the boat and checked to make sure everything was working properly, but I found that my depth finder kept shorting out after it would run for a few minutes. I diligently worked on it several days and every time it would seem to be running okay it would short-out again. I even delayed delivering the boat several days to get the flasher to work.

For those of you who may not be familiar with depth finders, this was the old fashioned type of "flasher" which attached to the boat's console with a couple of thumb screws and when it was switched on it just flashed the depth and possible objects below the boat but did not display a digital picture like the more modern depth finders. Therefore it really was not worth much money as part of my "trade-in"—maybe \$25.00-\$35.00 at the time.

I finally got the flasher to work and I took the boat to the gentleman's house to trade him and pick-up my new car. When I got to his house I explained to him why I had delayed our meeting and that the depth finder was working intermittently due to some kind of problem. He looked at it for a couple of minutes, walked over and unscrewed it from the console, and tossed it into an open trash can about 10 feet away. He then proclaimed "Now neither one of us have a problem!"

At the time I was a little shocked and irritated because I had spent so much time and effort attempting to fix the depth finder but after I had a little time to think about what happened I realized I had lost focus on my main objective which was trading the boat for the car—not dealing with an inexpensive depth finder.

Over the years I have thought about the man tossing that depth finder in the trash can when I am dealing with some small problem and I allow it to fester into a bigger problem. I think at various times we all lose focus and allow a small problem take our attention away from the bigger picture of what we are trying to accomplish. In our personal lives we often allow a small problem to escalate to the point where it turns into a major problem which can cause us to act in ways which pulls us away from God.

ZEN BUDDHISM OR THE BIBLE?

In recent years there have been a series of books written by Richard Carlson titled "Don't Sweat the Small Stuff." These books offer self help methods to help control one's worry and anger, to learn not to over react to things, to avoid focusing on negative thoughts, and to replace bad habits. Although the books offer some good ideas they are written from a Zen philosophical point of view which teaches a more passive view of life. The author notes "It's all small stuff" and if we just go with the flow of life we will find ultimate enlightenment and wisdom.

As Christians we know we must learn to deal with the worry, anxiety, anger, disappointments, grief, and physical pain we encounter in our earthly lives but we know our ultimate enlightenment comes from our knowledge of the Bible and how God expects us to live our lives while we are in this world.

Colossians 3:8-9 tells us we are to put away anger, wrath, and malice.

Ephesians 4:26 teaches us not to let the sun go down on our anger.

James 5:9 tells us not to hold a grudge against one another.

Luke 12:15 warns us not to be covetous and that man's life's is not about the abundance of material things he possesses.

In **2 Corinthians 12:7-10** Paul relates to us that while dealing with the physical pain of a "thorn in the flesh," he prayed three times for it to be removed, but God told him that His grace was sufficient for him and he learned to live with his infirmities.

1 Corinthians 10:17-18 teaches Christians that all us face temptations and difficulties in this life which are common to man, but God does not allow us to be tempted or tested beyond what we are able to bear and always offers us a way to escape in order to withstand our problems.

Paul wrote in **Philippians 4:11-13** that he had learned to be content in whatever state he found himself, and that he could do all things through Christ whom gives him strength. Note that Paul said "**he learned to be content**". It is not an innate quality with which we are born, but something we teach and discipline ourselves to do. Also note it does not say we can do some things but "all" things through Christ.

In **Matthew 6:25-34** Christ taught us not to worry (taking thought about that which we can do nothing—*Editor*) or be anxious about our lives and noted that "worry" cannot add one cubit to our stature. We are not to "worry" about

what we shall eat or how we will be clothed, for our heavenly Father already knows our needs. But we are to live our lives seeking first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness and all these things will be added unto you. Again we note that not some things but “all” these things will be added unto you.

Verse 34 reaches a conclusion: **“Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble”** (Quotations from *NKJV*)

One quote I read stated “Today is the tomorrow you worried about yesterday.” Tomorrow may never come so we are to deal with issues we face in our lives today and not be anxious about tomorrow. This does not mean we have a flip-flop attitude about tomorrow or fail to plan for the future, but not to be anxious about things which we cannot control.

In **Romans 8:28** Paul tells us that: **“And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.”**

And in **Philippians 4:6-7** we read, **“Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.”**

When we are dealing with human travails such as worry, anger, disappointment, grief, or physical pain we know we can always take our problems to God through prayer and find a peace through Him that, as the verse states, **“surpasses all understanding.”** In **verse 6** we read that we are to make our requests known to God in **“everything.”** That not only includes the large problems in our lives but also the “small stuff” troubling us. No problem is too large or too

small for God!

God already knows our needs, but by offering prayer and seeking strength and guidance through him we are showing to Him that we Christians are relying on his providential care to help us deal with our daily problems. We give God thanks for helping us with problems in the past and ask for his guidance in the future. God’s formula is sufficient to help us with all problems dealing with our mental health, our physical challenges, as well as our spiritual well being.

In **1 Peter 5:6-7** the apostle teaches us to **“... humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time, casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you.”**

GOD CARES FOR US!

If we fail to deal with our daily problems, our frustrations can lead to bigger problems and may draw us back into the world and lead us away from God. As we stated in the beginning of the lesson “Don’t sweat the small stuff”.

At the end of the day throw your anxieties and worries in the “trash can” and share your difficulties with God through prayer and supplications and find an inner peace.

We must always recall what is said in **James 4:14**, **“... you do not know what will happen tomorrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away”.**

All of us need to have the same attitude Paul expressed in **Acts 24:16**: **“I myself always strive to have a conscience without offense toward God and men.”**

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DEVIATIONS FROM THE TRUTH

Roelf L. Ruffner, Sr.

DISHONORABLE – HEBREWS 13:3

On March 23, 2012, the *Columbia Daily Herald* (Columbia, TN) had an article entitled “Move-in before marriage no longer predicts divorce.” Based on a recent government study researches have concluded that it may be beneficial for couples to live together before marriage. The study found that contrary to past studies living together does not necessarily ensure divorce after marriage.

Considering the statistical fact that half of first marriages break up within 20 years the writer asks the question, “Would we be better off living together first?” My answer to this erroneous assumption is “No!” Does it make it right

for a couple to live together outside of marriage just because some questionable “research” says so? For the believer in the infallible Bible the answer is an absolute “No!” Our standard is the Bible, theirs is fallible human wisdom—“philosophy and vain deceit” (Col. 2:8).

But for many people, living together before marriage has become the norm. (60% according to the study.) They are seeking to legitimize **“fornication,”** a **“work of the flesh”** and so a sin (cf. Gal. 5:19-21).

HERETIC DETECTOR

I read recently where a graduate student at Abilene Christian University was researching the life of “an over-

looked figure” which he FEELS has been “left out of 20th Century Churches of Christ history”—Don Carlos Janes (1877-1944). This researcher (and soon to be a missionary in Thailand) feels Janes had been left out because of “his controversial views about the end times.”

The real reason Janes has been “left out” is because he was a “marked” false teacher (Rom. 16:17,18). Janes was an advocate of premillennialism—the false doctrine that at His Second Coming Jesus Christ will set up an earthly kingdom and reign for a thousand years. This is contrary to the Scriptures that portray the Lord ruling and reigning NOW over a His spiritual kingdom—the church (Acts 2:32-33; 1 Cor. 15:25; 1 Tim. 6:15). Premillennialism dethrones Christ. Janes was also a “one man missionary society” who spread this heresy overseas. In the 1930s and 1940s Janes, R. H. Boll, Charles Neal and others attempted to spread this false system of infidelity among brethren in the States. Spiritual warrior Foy E. Wallace, Jr. and other soldiers of the cross slew this dragon using public debates, articles and the “sword of the Spirit.” Faithful brethren owe them a debt of gratitude. (April 26, 2012—<http://www.acu.edu/promise/exceptional/jeremy-hegi.html>).

April 26, 2012 – “The Last Will and Testament of Don Carlos Janes” - http://wordsfityspoken.org/bible_banner/v6/v6n8p3-4,5b.html).

IT WAS “GAY PRIDE WEEK”

Wednesday evening, May 27th, some of our members noticed a dark green SUV driving in and out of our parking lot at the Hill Town, TN church of Christ before services. I saw it through the front glass doors but did not pay attention since sometimes people will use our lot to turn around. But one brother arrived late to services and reported that two boys shouted at him “Hail Satan!” from the vehicle. He later called the sheriff’s department. This may or may not be due to the fact that I wrote a letter to the Columbia Daily Herald newspaper the week before complaining about President Obama’s support of same-sex marriage. I recieved several vicious comments about the letter on the online edition of the newspaper.

[The author of the following article is unknown—Editor]

THE BIBLE CONDEMNS HOMOSEXUALITY

The Bible’s condemnation of homosexuality is as clear and plain as the Bible’s condemnation of murder, adultery, premarital sex, kidnapping, lying, and idolatry. Further, for me to openly condemn homosexuality theologically makes me no more a “gay basher” than I am an “adultery basher”, “premarital sex basher”, “kidnapper basher” or a “murderer basher”. If you disagree, your argument is with God’s Bible.

The homosexual community has two ways of promoting their personal choices of being homosexual through the religious forum. *First*, some will claim the Bible actually promotes and condones homosexuality. *Second*, others try to get the Bible banned from public use by categorizing it as

hate literature.

For any to use the Bible to condone rather than condemn homosexual activity in the theological arena just proves such a one has absolutely no idea what the Bible actually teaches. For anyone to suggest the Bible says homosexual activity is acceptable to God, is nothing short of willful blindness. So to set the record straight once and for all, here is what the Bible teaches on the subject.

Anyone who has heard of the cities of “Sodom and Gommorah” knows that they were notorious hotbeds of homosexuality.

And they called unto Lot, and said unto him, Where are the men which came in to thee this night? Bring them out unto us, that we may know them. And Lot went out at the door unto them, and shut the door after him, And said, I pray you, brethren, do not so wickedly. Behold now, I have two daughters which have not known man; let me, I pray you, bring them out unto you, and do ye to them as is good in your eyes: only unto these men do nothing; for therefore came they under the shadow of my roof. (Gen. 19:5-8).

The Greek word in the New Testament for homosexuality is literally “a sodomite”. Jock is trying to redefine what the term “sodomite” means. (A term that has unchanged in 5000 years, even today—“sodomy”) Apart from the fact the city was clearly destroyed by God because of homosexuality in the narrative of Gen. 19, even the New Testament clearly states exactly the same thing in Jude 7—“**Even as Sodom and Gomorrha, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.**”

Any sinner should always remember that the God who commands us to love our neighbor is the same God who will cast any and all unrepentant sinners into the “**eternal fire.**” Here are more Bible quotes regarding God’s condemnation of homosexuality.

Thou shalt not lie with mankind, as with womankind: it is abomination. Neither shalt thou lie with any beast to defile thyself therewith: neither shall any woman stand before a beast to lie down thereto: it is confusion. You shall not lie with a male as one lies with a female; it is an abomination (Lev. 18:22-23).

If a man also lie with mankind, as he lieth with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination: they shall surely be put to death; their blood shall be upon them (Lev. 20:13).

Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind (homosexuals—*NKJV*), Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. (1 Cor. 6:9).

Knowing this, that the law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners, for unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, For

“A” IS FOR APOSTATE

Does the editor of a popular congregational directory now depend on some vague, subjective “a capella” heritage to designate who are congregations of the Lord’s body instead of the Bible? In the 2009 edition of “Churches of Christ of the United States,” the editor scripturally left out some of the urban, liberal congregations which now use the mechanical instruments of music in their vain worship. Now they have reversed that prohibition based on a “heritage” in the so called “Restoration Movement”: Disciples of Christ, Christian Church, and Churches of Christ. By that subjective standard how about the congregations of “instrumental” Churches of Christ in the West and the Mid-West, will they be included? They have never considered themselves “a capella” yet they are part of that increasingly apostate “Restoration Movement”? I suppose now the editor will put a small “a” by the name of the congregations, like “The Hills” (formerly the Richland Hills, Texas Church of Christ), to show their designation as apostate. How hypocritical (April 9, 2012 -http://www.christianchronicle.org/article2159587~Churches_with_instrumental_services_return_to_directory!)

THOMAS JEFFERSON’S BIBLE

“Jefferson’s Bible: *The Life and Morals of Jesus of Nazareth*” is the name of an exhibit at the Smithsonian’s National Museum of American History in Washington, D.C. In the later years of his life Thomas Jefferson, the third President of the United States and considered one of the Founding Fathers, attempted to edit the New Testament. He cut and pasted verses from the Gospel accounts to reflect what he felt were the “real” sayings of Jesus. He placed this patchwork in a book form which has been reprinted several times. “Scholars” have hailed this as an attempt to apply the principles of the 18th Century Enlightenment, the “Age of Reason,” to the Bible.

For centuries men have tried to depart from the simple teachings of Jesus in the New Testament for their own corrupt reasons. Sinners often try to “cut and paste” (symbolically) their Bibles trying to find that “loop hole” for their sinful lives. Some so called “scholars” do this in their quest for the “historical Jesus” which actually is a treasure hunt to find an excuse for their unbelief (2 Pet. 3:16; 1 Tim. 1:7; 2 Tim. 3:7). The truth be known, Jefferson was not an example of moral virtue. For example, he is known to have fathered several children by his slave and concubine, Sally Hemings (April 14, 2012 <http://cnsnews.com/news/article/smithsonian-touts-jefferson-s-genius-editing-gospels-and-removing-resurrection>).

MORAL DILEMA?

Recently I was watching a documentary on television about the Holocaust. One survivor of a concentration camp related how he witnessed a man praying for Divine deliverance from impending death in a gas chamber. When his death seemed imminent the man concluded, “There is no

God!” Another documentary on World War II interviewed a German veteran who surmised that, since both sides in the war prayed to the same God for victory over their enemies, there must be no God.

The unbelief of these two men is not unusual in the aftermath of disaster—war, natural disaster, suffering, and the tragic loss of a loved one. I can only imagine the horrors of war, plague, catastrophe and human bondage. Yet I should not (must not) give up in the face of horror and conclude that there is no God. Unbelief at its core is selfish and empty. It is an intellectual temper tantrum. The Bible tells us that God exists and His love for us, individually and collectively, is total (cf. John 3:16; 1 John 4:10).

We all need to realize that there is something far worse than human suffering and death—the Judgment of God: **“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it is good or bad”** (2 Cor. 5:10).

As a faithful Christian, I can be certain that God will rectify all injustice and punish all evil—if not in this life, surely in the next. We must look beyond our frail, finite vision and see the righteous avenging Lord: **“Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand”** (Rev. 6:16–17)?

Eventually, the Allied Armies (Russia, Britain, and America) came and liberated the death camps. Nations were liberated from National Socialist tyranny. The Nazi war machine was destroyed. Trials were held and many were punished for their crimes. It was not complete justice by any means but a foretaste of The Judgment Day.

And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works (Rev. 20:12).

God is not the source of evil in this world—Satan and men are. If men followed the will of God there would be no wars and much less human suffering (cf. Jam. 4:1–2). Instead we often follow the flesh and wage war, murder, and inflict injury: **“Then said Jesus unto him, Put up again thy sword into his place: for all they that take the sword will perish with the sword”** (Mat. 28:52).

To shake our fist at the heavens in the face of misery is to deny the obvious: God is in control and His will is being done, whatever we may imagine to the contrary; whatever the forces of Hell are against us. We have the free will to believe in God and obey Him or not. **“Wherefore do I take my flesh in my teeth, and put my life in mine hand? Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him: But I will maintain mine own ways before him”** (Job 13:14–15).

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(Continued from page 1)

into your house, neither bid him God speed: for he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds (2 John 1:9-11).

Faithful brethren cannot receive nor bid God speed to the false teacher Dave Miller or his false doctrine.

The Apostle Paul said: **“And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them.”** (Eph. 5:11). The fruits of the Dave Miller doctrine of elder re-evaluation and reaffirmation are that Biblically qualified men were removed from the eldership and the Brown Trail Church was split not once but twice by the teaching and practice of this false doctrine. In addition, numerous other congregations have been divided concerning this false doctrine and concerning fellowship of the false teacher, Dave Miller. Paul further stated:

Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple (Rom. 16:17-18).

Faithful brethren marked and avoided the false teacher Dave Miller and his false doctrine of elder reevaluation and reaffirmation.

After claiming that he did “not teach nor believe this doctrine” of elder re-evaluation and reaffirmation, and then again saying: “I do not believe it, however,” our speaker, contradicted himself by saying: “And so to me it’s kind of a moot thing. It’s not a concern for me.” (According to Webster, the word “moot” means, “not worthy of consideration or discussion because it has been resolved or no longer needs to be resolved.”). He went on to say: “And so I think that this is something that we need, as far as I’m concerned, we need to put this behind us” His reasons (?) were and are as follows: “Because although at Brown Trail this actually occurred in 1990, that’s twenty years ago, as far as I know there are no churches that are troubled with it. I’ve never met a preacher that believes this idea...As I have said I have not met a preacher that believes that or teaches it.”

“THAT’S TWENTY YEARS AGO”

Twice in his opening remarks, the speaker stated that Dave Miller and his committee cohorts taught and practiced this false doctrine of elder re-evaluation and reaffirmation in 1990. He then exclaimed: “that’s twenty years ago.” Two points need to be made here.

First: He is making an evasive appeal to time. I ask: What does time have to do with whether the Dave Miller doctrine of elder re-evaluation and reaffirmation is scriptural or unscriptural? I affirm: *If the Dave Miller doctrine of elder re-evaluation and reaffirmation was unscriptural in 1990 it is unscriptural today.* The Apostle Peter once wrote: **“But,**

beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day” (2 Peter 3:8). He specifically applied this point to the promise of the Lord’s return, saying: “The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness: (2 Peter 3:9).

Some men were saying that because so much time had elapsed, the Lord’s promise was not going to be fulfilled. But Peter explained that the Lord **“is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance”** (2 Peter 3:9). He concluded:

But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up (2 Peter 3:10).

The Lord’s promise was and is true whether one day goes by or whether one thousand years goes by.

The Dave Miller doctrine of elder re-evaluation and reaffirmation is still false after one day goes by and/or after one thousand years go by. Twenty years or a thousand years of time will not change it from being unscriptural to being scriptural. Twenty years or a thousand years of time will not change it from being false to being true. Twenty years or a thousand years of time will not change it from being wrong to being right.

Second: Our speaker did not once mention anywhere in his sermon that the Dave Miller doctrine of elder re-evaluation and reaffirmation was taught and practiced a second time at Brown Trail in 2003. Either he did not know this or he did know it. If he did not know it, he was ignorant of his subject and his evasive appeal to time was and is demonstrated to be a false appeal (unless he is willing to affirm that the practice was unscriptural, and false, and wrong in 1990, but scriptural, and true, and right in 2003). If he did know that it was practiced a second time in 2003 (the fruits of which were the same as the first time in 1990 – the Brown Trail church split), then he is dishonest in not stating these facts.

“THERE ARE NO CHURCHES THAT ARE TROUBLED WITH IT”

Our speaker further stated: “...as far as I know there are no churches that are troubled with it.” He also said:

But the point is if it was an ongoing thing that was causing disturbance and division in the church of our Lord then that’s one thing, but with a few exceptions there are no problems that I’m aware of along that line. There are no churches being divided by it.

Again, he is either ignorant of the facts or dishonest in not stating the facts. To begin with, the Brown Trail church was troubled with it and split by it on two occasions. I preached for the Lee and Walnut church of Christ in Sapulpa, Oklaho-

ma (not far from the Eastside church of Christ in Muskogee, Oklahoma where this sermon was preached) from 2002 to 2006. That church was troubled with it and I resigned and moved back to Florida because of it. The Eastside church of Christ in Muskogee, Oklahoma, where this sermon was preached, was troubled with it. *The reason this sermon was being preached was because the church there was disturbed by it.* That very congregation was divided and split by it. Oh, for an honest false teacher.

“I’VE NEVER MET A PREACHER THAT BELIEVES THIS IDEA”

Our speaker also said: “I’ve never met a preacher that believes this idea...As I have said I have not met a preacher that believes that or teaches it.” Yet, he then said:

Now some years back Dave Miller made a very clear statement, and I have a copy of it if you’d like a copy...he made a clear statement stating that he did not believe or teach today the idea of the reaffirmation of elders as he was accused.

Then, immediately, he contradicted this statement, saying: “Now he did teach that. I have seen the transcript.” He admits two things that need to be noted. *First*, he admits that he knows Dave Miller (a preacher) believed this idea. *Second*, he admits that he knows that Dave Miller was not being truthful when he said that he did not believe or teach today the idea of the reaffirmation of elders as he was accused, since our speaker has seen the transcript of what Dave Miller believed and taught. Our speaker went on to speak about the committee:

There were four brethren including brother Johnny Ramsey and Johnny Ramsey I always felt was as straight as a string. I don’t know of any preachers that were more sound than Johnny Ramsey. Johnny was one of the four men involved in this process.

Here he admits that he knows that Johnny Ramsey (a preacher) believed this idea.

Now, how many preachers have to believe and or teach the Dave Miller doctrine of elder re-evaluation and reaffirmation before the preachers and the doctrine are delivered unto Satan? Let the Apostle Paul answer. **“Of whom is Hymenaeus and Alexander; whom I have delivered unto Satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme”** (1 Tim. 1:20). Could these two preachers and their blasphemy be fellowshiped after twenty years of time? If only one or two or three churches were troubled by their blasphemy would it be right to fellowship them? If these were the only two preachers in the brotherhood to blaspheme would it be right to fellowship them? Faithful gospel preachers know that the answer to these questions is no. Faithful gospel preachers also know that Dave Miller and his doctrine of elder re-evaluation and reaffirmation cannot be fellowshiped.

“DAVE MILLER MADE A VERY CLEAR STATEMENT”

Our speaker affirmed:

Now some years back Dave Miller made a very clear statement, and I have a copy of it if you’d like a copy...he made a clear statement stating that he did not believe or teach today the idea of the reaffirmation of elders as he was accused.

He then contradicted this affirmation when he immediately stated: “Now he did teach that. I have seen the transcript.”

The statement to which he refers is the Dave Miller statement of 2005 titled: “For Honorable Brethren Who Sincerely Want To Know.” That statement actually reads: “I do not believe in the ‘reaffirmation/re-evaluation of elders’ as my critics have defined the concept.” But Dave Miller himself defined the concept in his own sermon of April 8, 1990. Our speaker referred to this sermon when he said: “I have seen the transcript.” He knows that the Dave Miller claim that he does not believe in or teach the idea of reaffirmation of elders as accused, is a bogus claim because he has the transcript of Dave Miller’s own sermon. Thus, he then claims that Dave Miller does not teach “today” what he taught then. He says: “Dave Miller has repudiated his teaching. He’s saying ‘I don’t teach today what I did teach.’” Again, he says: “But the point is that he is not now teaching what he taught.” Again he says: “Dave has renounced his teaching. He said very clearly that he no longer teaches it, he does not believe it.” This claim is also bogus.

Ever since this statement of Dave Miller appeared in 2005 brethren have been asking at least these three questions. (1) Where is the statement of confession of sin? (2) Where is the statement of repentance of sin? (3) Where is the statement requesting (praying for) forgiveness of sin? Faithful brethren know that in order for a false teacher to repudiate and renounce his false teaching he must make a confession of sin. **“Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed”** (Jam. 5:16). **“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness”** (1 John 1:9). Faithful brethren know that in order for a false teacher to repudiate and renounce his false teaching he must repent of sin. **“I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish”** (Luke 13:3). **“Repent therefore of this thy wickedness...”** (Acts 8:22). **“Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much”** (Jam. 5:16). According to Dave Miller, the statement of 2005 is “a brief word of explanation and clarification” and not a statement of repudiation or renunciation of anything Dave Miller previously taught or practiced.

(To Be Continued)

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ELITISM HAS NO PLACE IN THE LORD'S KINGDOM

Darrell Debo

It is not difficult to define elitism. The dictionary describes it as the “rule or domination by an elite, or a sense of being part of an elite.” The elite are those considered as a “small and privileged given social group, sometimes thought to be the best or most skilled” among those who constitute that group, who consider themselves the “best and most skilled” in whatever area they are measured or weighed.

Elitism may be found in many areas, such as civil, social, moral, as well as religious genres. It is in the latter of these that we would note the appearance of an attitude that has emerged in the Lord's church among some brethren during the last number of decades. It is not enough, however, to just diagnose this obnoxious and demeaning spiritual ailment. We must also go to the very source of what causes this insufferable infection and ascertain if the diagnosis is actually true. Having ascertained that it is, there will be, then, an opportunity to determine what the Great Physician has prescribed as the sure and divinely authorized scriptural cure. A human remedy will not suffice in alleviating and eliminating such a detestable Satan-authored disease, for it is a spiritual and not a physical problem.

First of all, in determining the source of the illness, we easily are able to note the claims and grandiose affirmations by most of those who constitute this elitist group. Their “higher” education and a greater, superior knowledge gained thereby and therein is the emphasis of their pronouncements. The elitists usually assume that the time spent at the feet of certain professors, who are capable of influencing and thereby altering previously learned and held attitudes and beliefs, automatically elevates them to a higher and superior level in Bible knowledge and understanding over the “common” and “ordinary” Christian who has been educated in Christ's school and filled up with a great abundance and depth of the Word of God.

There is certainly a vast amount of difference in the classrooms of “our” elite institutions of “higher” learning where professors spout the liberal and modernistic lines they have imbibed in Northern and Eastern sectarian and denominational seminaries and where earnest, faith-building teaching is received from faithful and sound brethren, who have not succumbed to the devilish isms of the present day. The attitude of the elitists' superiority in education and knowledge developed, therefore, produces what they assume to be a superior righteousness. They portray themselves as those who dwell in the ivory towers of a vastly higher plane and spiritual elevation than one who is content to be a dedicated, earnest New Testament Christian, who subjects himself to and is therefore obedient to heaven's Will as opposed to the

doctrines and commandments of men.

Seemingly evident among us now, it appears that many elitists would rather choose exercises borrowed from Hindu gurus and mystics of Romanism than what the apostle Paul called the divine promise that comes “**through the righteousness of faith.**” (Rom. 4:13) Any brethren not desirous of following along in the sinful road of elitism, who would dare oppose or challenge the self-elevated exhibitors, are either just laughed at inanely, snubbed as unworthy of consideration, or just blandly ignored. Hence, we note the air of condescension many times exhibited by many elitists toward brethren who do not and will not subscribe to their pronounced dogmas and emphases.

Another area noteworthy facet among the elitists is that of judgmentalism, which arises because of their supposed superiority and condescending attitude. They do not hesitate to pass harsh and critical judgments on those who are still determined to walk in the “Old Paths” of divine wisdom. Every imaginary ill ever thought about or which they claim to have been committed by the church in the past is haughtily slammed against the precious body of Christ, which is castigated and demeaned as “out-of-date,” “behind the times,” and “not suited for the culture of our day.” The pioneer preaching brethren who brought us the church as we know it are vilified and considered ignoramuses. Would to God they would remember the words of the apostle Paul: “**Let us not therefore judge one another any more: but judge ye this rather, that no man put a stumbling block in his brother's way...**” (Rom. 14:13).

Clinging to the solid rock of divinely authored Truth is not the force nor the stumbling block severing fellowship among brethren in the modern-day church of Christ, but rather the introduction of the innovations and man-made errors by the elitists. Having drunk deeply at the wells of liberalism and outright modernism held by sectarian institutions where they obtained their highly regarded and treasured degrees, is it any wonder that conflict will ensue between the elitists and those who still cling to the plenary, inerrant Word of the Living God who will not and dare not surrender a thirty-second of an inch of divine Truth?

The outright rejection of the Bible as that divinely inspired revelation from the portals of heaven itself in most cases has resulted in the despicable attitudes evident among the elitists today. They now deny that the New Testament is the law of Christ, despite the fact that Paul and James affirmed it to be law (Gal. 6:2; James 1:25). Jesus said it would be by His words we shall all be judged. (John 12:48) How presumptuous an attitude can one manifest than to attempt

to elevate man's wisdom to superiority over God's wisdom, which is relegated to the trash heap of time. The elitist, because of this attitude, also denies the New Testament contains a divine pattern to follow in the face of Hebrews 8:5. Those self-expressed in "superiority in knowledge and understanding" seem not to care that Paul admonished brethren to hold the "pattern" of sound words (2 Tim. 1:13).

The most tragic and pitiful aspect of the whole "elitism" situation among the brethren is that these elitists are reticent to admit their liberalism and try to deny that they are truly "change agents," protesting oftentimes that they have not abandoned the plea to restore the Christianity authored and portrayed on the pages of the New Testament. Many times they have the audacity to yet claim their respect for the Word of God, pretending to be religious conservatives and faithful members of the church of Christ.

In dealing with the social and political liberal elements in government, former Secretary of Education William Bennett was astounded at what he termed their "insufferable moral superiority" manifest blatantly in attempts to extend

their tenets throughout the government and society in general. Today, in the Lord's church, when you come across elitists in either person or in material they have written, see if their "insufferable moral superiority" is not so self-evident that their disease is undeniable. And make sure that you know the difference and continue to cling to the Truth, for the ailment is contagious! The divine cure is without doubt the same as has always been true in the case of man-made error: a good stiff dose of the Word of God without addition, substitution, or subtraction imbibed within the soul that will not shirk from obedience thereunto. Brethren, don't you think that the "reaffirmation" of a true faith in the veracity of the revelation from heaven's portals injected into the human heart, along with the development of a sturdy backbone to uphold what they know to be the Truth, will cure the ailment? The cure of the Great Physician will always heal the sin-sick soul.

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PEER PRESSURE

Brock Hartwigen

Peer pressure is something we hear and read a lot about. It is usually used in a negative sense. It refers to the influence our equals have on us to behave like they behave.

There are examples of peer pressure in the Bible. The Israelites succumbed to peer pressure in 1 Sam. 8:20 when they demanded a king so that they could "**be like all the nations.**" In John 12:42-43 we read that "**among the chief rulers many believed**" but "**they did not confess him.**" Why? Peer pressure, "**lest they should be put out of the synagogue.**" Paul tells us in Gal. 2:11-14 about a time that the apostle Peter fell victim to peer pressure. He regularly ate "**with the Gentiles: but when**" some influential Jewish Christians came to town he "**withdrew and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision.**" Paul had to withstand Peter "**to the face, because he was to be blamed.**"

If the nation of Israel, believing eye-witnesses of Jesus and even the apostle Peter could be influenced negatively by peer pressure, then we should realize that we can be also. "**Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall**" (1 Cor. 10:12).

The problem is how can we protect ourselves and our family from peer pressure? There are two basic protections. The first is well known and often talked and written about.

A good sense of self-worth will protect us. If we feel that we are important, lovable, valuable, etc., then we do not need the crowd's approval. An improper self-love can produce selfishness. Jesus, however, not only tells everyone to "love his neighbor," but He also tells us how "**as himself**" (Mark 12:33). With a proper sense of self-love, we will not easily fall victim to peer pressure.

The second defense is when we as Christians recognize that we have no peers in this world. With this knowledge we will feel no peer pressure. How can I say that a Christian has no peers in this world? We have no peers in the world because peers are equals and Christians have no equals in the world. Christians are the redeemed, the only ones who have accepted the purchased blood of Jesus. Christians have a unique relation with God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. Christians are "**lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood**" (1 Peter 2:5).

There are three Greek words used in the Bible which further explain how Christians have no peers in the world. The first word is *xenos*. *Xenos* simply means a foreigner or stranger. In Heb. 11:13-16 we find that the Israelites are referred to as "**strangers and pilgrims on the earth**" and that "**they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly.**" Christians are also "**strangers and pilgrims on the earth.**" We are citizens of God's kingdom who just happen to be tempo-

rarily residing in Stanton, KY or Toronto, Canada. We also **“desire a better country, that is, an heavenly,”** because **“our citizenship is in heaven”** (Phi. 3:20, *SV*).

The second word is *parapidemos*. *Parapidemos* means a pilgrim, a sojourner in a strange place, one away from home. This word is used in Heb. 11:13-16 to describe the Israelites, *“they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.”* Peter, writing to Christians, addresses them in 1 Peter 1:1 as **“the strangers (*parapidemos*) scattered throughout.”** In 1 Peter 2:11 he said **“dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims (*parapidemos*).”** Christians may own a house in Oklahoma or Ottawa, but they are only temporary residents there. Christians are on their way home to heaven. They may live here, but their roots and heart should not be here. As one person put it, *“The world is only a bridge; we are to pass over it and not build our dwelling upon it.”*

The third word is *paroidein*. This word means to live beside, to live in a place as a stranger. We would call such people today resident aliens. Abraham’s decedents were called *paroidein*, resident aliens, in Acts 7:6 **“his seed should sojourn [*paroidein*] in a strange land.”** Peter also used this word to describe Christians in 1 Peter 2:11 **“dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers (*paroidein*) and pilgrims.”** Christians are to be a people who live in the world, but who never accept the lifestyle of the world or consider it home. A Christian on this earth is like an American who resides in Russia, but who insists on maintaining his American culture and language. The Christian’s culture and language is different from that of this world and as long as he insists on maintaining his Christian culture and language, he will be protected from the influence of the alien culture he lives in.

It took Israel generations to learn this lesson. While

they are wrong in rejecting Christ and holding to their customs and traditions, we can still learn from them. The Orthodox Jew living in America or Russia looks upon himself as a stranger, pilgrim or alien. To him his home is Israel, even if he has never visited it, his culture Jewish, and his language Hebrew. This view of life has enabled this culture to outlast all of the ancient cultures by resisting cultural peer pressure.

If, as Christians, we recognize and accept the view of life taught by God in scripture that we are strangers, pilgrims and aliens, our home is heaven, our culture Christian, and our language the word of God, then we also can resist peer pressure and maintain our unique and pure culture in this corrupt world. Remember Jesus **“gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people”** (Tit. 2:14).

Let us say no to the peer pressures of the world around us. Let us maintain our holiness and peculiarities. Let us truly be aliens, sojourners, in a strange country and, thus, find protection from the evil influences of peer pressure.

—189 Brookside Dr.
Stanton, KY 40380

To admit you were wrong is but to say that you know more today than you knew yesterday.



Failed in argument, you now attempt assassination of character.

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TO APPEAR OR TO NOT APPEAR

Charles Pogue

From time to time, the question arises, should a faithful Gospel preacher appear on a lectureship with a false teacher or teachers? Although the answer to the question seems a very plain and emphatic “no” to anyone who thinks seriously about it, there is another point to address before getting to the one about appearing with the purveyor of false doctrine.

It seems to this writer that the more fundamental question is, can a brother appear on a lectureship program that has invited a false teacher or false teachers without violating the scripture on the issue of fellowship? Eph. 5:11 states, **“And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them.”** If a lectureship program inviting a false teacher or teachers is not in and of itself an unfruitful work of darkness why is it not? If it is not, what would it take to make it so? Thus, it seems to me that it makes no difference who else has been invited to speak, the actions of a lectureship sponsoring entity, by inviting a false teacher or false teachers, would be of such a nature that would, in and by itself, forbid a faithful man from appearing on the program.

A failure to recognize the foregoing is the very problem we are having today with some brethren who are ignoring the association clause of 2 John 9-11. The false teacher is not to be invited into the house. If the house invites him in anyway, the house becomes guilty, and any who fellowship the house would be guilty of fellowshiping not one, but two forbidden entities, the house, and the false teacher. If that is not true, why is it not? Not only is that so, but a person who fellowshiped someone who fellowshiped the house, would be guilty of fellowshiping an unfruitful work of darkness, By appearing on a lectureship that has invited false teachers, a “sound” preacher would be guilty of fellowshiping the forbidden before the question of whether he was fellowshiping the false teacher was even a consideration!

In response to the question of whether or not one is fellowshiping the false teacher by appearing on a lectureship or other program with him, would he or would he not be jointly participating with the false teacher in a program that is itself guilty for inviting the false teacher? Clearly, the answer is yes. That would make, then, the allegedly sound preacher in violation of not one, but two, breaches of fellowship, and one of them would be joint participation with the false teacher in an error, the error of the program that invited the false teacher to begin with. It is not hard to understand, and the objection of where does it end, or where does one draw the line, is, as the old folks used to say, “horse feathers”!

One application to this point is that because they have

both extended fellowship to false teachers, and have had men on their lectureship who have appeared congenially on other programs with false teachers, a sound man would not speak on the Memphis lectureship, because by the actions of the Forest Hill elders, and the directorship of the MSOP lectures, it has now made itself an unfruitful work of darkness.

The question brethren kick back and forth as to whether appearance with the false teacher constitutes fellowshiping the false teacher, while it is plain in my mind to be an absolute “yes”; why don’t brethren pay close attention to what Paul wrote concerning Hymenaeus and Alexander (1 Tim. 1:19-20), and Hymenaeus and Philetus (2 Tim. 2:16-17), and explain to us how Paul would appear on a lectureship program with any of those men. It is altogether out of the question!

Brethren often declare that they would go anywhere at any time to preach the Gospel. Me thinks that statement ought to have just a bit of qualification to it, because whether anyone likes it or not, the New Testament draws some lines of fellowship where brethren are concerned. Would I go to a Baptist church if I had the freedom to preach the undiluted Gospel of Christ? Certainly! But I would not speak on the lectures of ACU, PU, or now MSOP, because the scriptural doctrine of fellowship prevents it. The *where* is not the issue, but *who* is involved is, and if that includes unrepentant brethren, no matter how much some wish to explain away Romans 16:17, it still clearly instructs us to mark and avoid them.

Recently one brother argued that drawing a line of distinction about which lectures a sound man can appear on would imply Paul could not have spoken on the Areopagus because of heathen philosophers who had spoken from that rocky precipice in the past. That ridiculous argument shows the inherent weakness of the position. The claim is absurd, but one can be assured that Paul would not have appeared there on a lectureship along with Hymenaeus!

I have no illusions that what is written here will not convince those who are bound and determined to fellowship false teachers while denying that is what they are doing, but as for me, I refuse to place any addendum or modification to Eph. 5:11, **“And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them.”** Paul wrote it by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and that ought to settle it for anyone who loves gospel truth.

—P. O. Box 592
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2012 SPRING CHURCH OF CHRIST *CFTF* LECTURESHIP

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Geoff Litke: *Are Pious Unimmersed Persons Christians?*

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Bruce Stulting: *Are Faithful Children of God Found in the Denominations?*

John West: *What is the Independent Christian Church?*

Michael Hatcher: *What is the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)?*

Daniel Denham wrote the chapter in the book. Skip Francis delivered the lecture, *What is Dispensationalism?*

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John Rose: *What is the Lutheran Church?*

Gene Hill wrote the chapter in the book. Ken Chumbley delivered the lecture: *What is the Presbyterian Church?*

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Johnny Oxendine: *What is the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (Mormons)?*

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-Texas-

Denton area—Northpoint Church of Christ, 5101 E. University Dr. (Greenbelt Business Park). Mailing address: Northpoint Church of Christ, Greenbelt Business Park, 5101 E. University Dr., Box 6, Denton, TX 76208. E-mail: northpointcoc@hotmail.com. Sunday: 9:30, 10:30, 1:00; Wednesday 7:00. Contact: Dub McClish: (940) 387-1429; dubmcclish@gmail.com.

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